

CITIZENS FOR THE TREATMENT OF HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, INC.

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The Honorable Edward P. Boland
2426 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20515

COPY

Dear Eddie:

Yesterday (July 24), the full Senate Appropriations Committee marked up the Department of Housing and Urban Development-Independent Agencies appropriations bill for Fiscal 1980.

Mary Lasker, Dr. Michael E. DeBakey and I are deeply interested in one area of the medical and prosthetic research part of the bill. In lieu of a long-winded explanation, I enclose the excerpt from the Senate Appropriations Committee report which details their support of a VA cooperative study of the most serious illness affecting veterans today -- high blood pressure.

Dr. Edward Freis of the VA central office is one of the top figures, if not the foremost figure, in VA medical research. His reputation is world-wide. In the early 1960's, Mary Lasker and I went to him and requested him to organize a study to prove convincingly that a high blood pressure detection and treatment program could save the lives of hundreds of thousands of veterans. These two cooperative studies were completed in 1967 and in 1970 and the results published in the JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION and elsewhere. I enclose a recent article on Dr. Freis which highlights the remarkable reductions in deaths from heart disease and stroke as a result of the Freis studies.

As you undoubtedly know, the Veterans Administration brings in a group of nationally-known research experts twice a year to rate applications for Cooperative Studies. As could have been predicted, the new Freis study received the highest possible rating at the spring meeting of the expert committee. When Mary Lasker and I were notified of this, we were naturally delighted. However, over the past several months Dr. Freis has gotten the impression that his cooperative study may be held up because of funding limitations. Mary and I cannot buy this. For example, I note that in the Fiscal 1980 report of your Committee, in adding \$5 million above the budget, you stress "priority research in the medical research activity." If the work of Dr. Freis does not have top priority in funding, then there is something wrong with the present leadership

of VA medical research. You will note from the enclosed document from Dr. Freis that the Fiscal 1980 figure he is requesting is \$388,000; the second year figure is \$409,000, and the total at the end of the six years of the project is approximately \$2,700,000.

In actual fact, the new Freis study requires no additional monies. There is enough money in the VA Cooperative Study budget to cover these small amounts. In essence, this letter is not an appeal for additional funds but just background information on some Senate language which Mary and I are confident you will accept.

Eddie, Mary, Dr. DeBakey and I have had a long-time interest in VA medical research, as you well know. We go back to the days when Rep. Albert Thomas was the Lord High Executioner of the Subcommittee, and when Mike DeBakey, the late Dr. Sidney Farber of Boston's Children's Hospital, and many other medical greats testified year in and year out to help build the Veterans Administration medical research program from practically nothing to one of the finest in the world. We deserve no credit for this -- it is the Congress which supplied the funds which made all of these achievements possible.

If you need any further information on this, please feel free to call me at any time. It goes without saying that Mary Lasker and I are deeply in debt for your continued support of both top-notch VA medical research and medical care over the past quarter of a century. If we didn't have too many statues in Washington, I would suggest that we build one for you.

Cordially,

Mike Gorman
Executive Director

P.S. My good friend Lou Stokes, a member of your Subcommittee, is deeply interested in high blood pressure. It causes twice as many deaths among blacks as it does among whites. Lou has been the key catalyst in pushing for high blood pressure service grants to the states over the past five years.

M. G.

Enc.